

DETAILED ACTION

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Joe Carrier on June 30, 2010.

The application has been amended as follows:

In claim 1, line 10, insert --comprising first and second gripping members-- after "by a gripping mechanism".

In claim 1, line 11, insert --where each of the first and second gripping members of-- after "along said joining direction,".

In claim 1, line 12, insert --and is complementary to-- after "a recess which surrounds".

In claim 1, line 12, replace "the" with --an associated-- before "pair of fingers".

In claim 5, line 4, delete "and" at the end of the line.

In claim 5, after line 4, insert --gripping protrusions by a gripping mechanism comprising first and second gripping members such that the fingers of said protrusions are maintained in abutment along a joining direction, where each of the first and second gripping members of the gripping mechanism includes a recess which surrounds and is complementary to outer edges of an associated pair of fingers of the first or second protrusion such that the fingers cannot move apart in a direction perpendicular to the joining direction; and--.

Claims 10-31 and 33: cancelled.

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Specification, paragraph [076.1], filed via preliminary amendment dated 06/01/05: has been deleted.

Specification, after paragraph [076]: --FIG. 18 is a horizontal plan view of an aligning cylinder, a floating rod, a joint member and a placement joint member connected to the support body extending through the hollow cylindrical body.--- was inserted.

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The closest prior art of record, US 2,740,877 Knauth et al teaches a pair of gripping fingers used to hold flat sheets of metal during a process of welding them together. It would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the gripping fingers of Knauth in the method of friction stir welding pipes as taught by US 5,794,835 Colligan et al in view of US 2,148,714 Urschel because the mechanism of Knauth includes a horn assembly **14** that functions with the gripping fingers to urge the workpieces close together. The horn assembly would not be of use in the method of Colligan in view of Urschel. Furthermore, Knauth does not teach gripping members including recesses where the recesses are complementary to the pairs of fingers.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MEGHA MEHTA whose telephone number is (571)270-3598. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday 7:30 am to 5:00 pm EST.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jessica Ward can be reached on 571-272-1223. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Megha Mehta/
Examiner, Art Unit 1793

/Jessica L. Ward/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1793